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Information and communication technology security, business continuity and disaster recovery

Note by the Secretariat*

1. It is recalled that in his report A/59/365/Add.1 and Corr.1, the Secretary-General had estimated, based on preliminary work, that the total requirements for the establishment and maintenance of a global business continuity and disaster recovery capability for the Organization, including those for peacekeeping and special political missions, could be in the range of from 30 million to 35 million United States dollars. A technical study was proposed at that time to validate the preliminary work, refine the business requirements, evaluate alternate solutions and identify the infrastructure and support resources needed to set up and operate the required system. In its resolution 59/276 of 23 December 2004, section XI, paragraph 47, the General Assembly had requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Assembly at its sixtieth session the results of the technical study on information and communication technology security, business continuity and disaster recovery, with detailed costing and a timetable.

2. In order to specifically address the General Assembly's request for a detailed proposal, the Secretariat initiated a comprehensive review of the issues associated with the establishment of the global business continuity and disaster recovery capability, including risk assessment and a business impact analysis survey. In the course of the study, the infrastructure, systems and applications, and other critical business instruments for each duty station, were reviewed and verified in the context of the project requirements. The requirements were balanced with the global business continuity and disaster recovery strategy of the Organization to set a global operational framework. The operational framework requirements for the project are based on the following organizational objectives:

* The timing of the issuance of the present note reflects the need to have undertaken extensive analysis of alternatives allowing for potential cost-saving measures.

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(a) The ability of the principal organs to conduct crucial meetings;

(b) The ability to maintain information and communication technology services;

(c) Ensuring continuity of key financial transactions;

(d) Sustaining communications with the staff and the permanent missions of Member States.

3. The findings of the study indicated the possibility of meeting the operational objectives by building upon the existing information and communication technology infrastructure of the Secretariat, taking into account opportunities to leverage previous investment (existing infrastructure), improving capacity and maintainability while at the same time achieving economies of scale, and building a common pool of skills. Based on the outcome of the study, it was recognized that further analysis of possible "value-engineering" alternatives so as to identify potential cost-saving measures would be required. Those alternatives include such approaches as a potential consolidation, outsourcing and offshoring of the information and communication technology operations. These approaches may yield cost savings by creating opportunities for cost-sharing, reducing operating and labour costs, and minimizing duplication of effort. These analyses would also take into account the ongoing security projects being undertaken by the Department of Safety and Security.

4. The full potential of the financial opportunities of the approaches was not sufficiently seen at the time of preparation of the previous reports of the Secretary-General (A/59/365 and Corr.1 and Add.1 and Add.1/Corr.1). To enable the results of the full scope of work involved in the cost-benefit analysis and identification of possible cost-saving approaches to be reported to the General Assembly, the Secretary-General proposes to submit his comprehensive report on the project to the Assembly at its sixty-first session. In terms of the resources involved, the finalization of the project scope, its timetable and cost estimates would be undertaken largely from within the existing resources approved for the current biennium under section 28D, Office of Central Support Services. As necessary, the existing capacity of the Office would be supplemented by independent external specialized expertise on an as-required basis. To the extent possible, these external specialized requirements, estimated in the amount of $250,000, will be accommodated from within the overall resources approved for the biennium 2006-2007 under section 28D and reported as necessary in the context of the performance report for the biennium.

5. **The Secretary-General recommends that the General Assembly endorse the course of action proposed in the present note.**